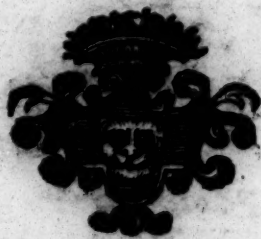


Theology vol. 37

THE
CREDIBILITY
OF THE
Resurrection of Christ,
UPON THE
TESTIMONY
OF THE
APOSTLES;

BEING
A Sequel to Two Letters in the
WEEKLY MISCELLANY, No 121, 122.
—*Upon the Fitness of the Witnesses.*

By *WILLIAM WEBSTER*, D.D. Rector
of *Depden*, in the County of *SUFFOLK*.



L O N D O N:

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Coel Thornhille, Esq;

Of DEPDEN-HALL, in the County
of SUFFOLK.

IT is now upwards of
two Years since You
gave me a very kind
and *seasonable* Instance
of Your Friendship, and I take
this first publick Opportunity to
make you the only Return in
my Power, to pay you the
Thanks of a sincerely grateful
Heart. I am well aware that I
run the Hazard of committing
an Offence while I mean to per-
form a Duty ; but, I hope, the

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same

DEDICATION.

same Generosity which inclin'd You to be my Friend, will allow me to have some Regard to my *own Reputation*, as well as to *Your Temper*. Had Your Kindness been a *Secret*, I would content myself with such an Acknowledgment as would be most agreeable to the Modesty of my Benefactor, with my private Thanks and Prayers ; but as the Benefit could not be concealed from the World, give me leave to say, it would be unreasonable in You to expect that I should be able to satisfy myself without letting the World know that I have a true Sense of my Obligations. But if I were willing to lie under the disgraceful Imputation of *Ingratitude*, which every honest Mind is studious to avoid, I should injure the *Publick* by neglecting this Occasion to propose to their Imitation an
Ex-

DEDICATION.

Example so worthy to be imitated, at a Time when such Examples are so rare. For a Gentleman to give a *Living* unfollicited, and without any dishonourable or disagreeable Conditions; to confer such a Favour without expecting that the Person obliged should ever after commence a *Slave*, and make his Patron a Compliment of his *Freedom* for having accepted a *Preferment* from him; to take no Advantage of his *Clerk* by getting any Part of his Estate excus'd from legal Demands, or any Part of those Demands abated; to support all his rightful Claims in the Parish, and to make the Discharge of his Function more easy and effectual by the Weight of his Power, and the greater Influence of his Example: These, Sir, I fear, are Circumstances rather to be wished for by every Cler-

DEDICATION.

Clergyman, than always to be expected; yet this is a Felicity which it is my good Fortune to enjoy, and my Duty, as well as Pleasure, to acknowledge. In one Instance I shall consult Your Inclination, by forbearing to mention your social Virtues, which intitle you to the Love and Esteem of such as have the Happiness of being acquainted with You. But then You must excuse me again if I take the liberty to tell the Avaricious Worldling, and the Crafty Politician, that a Gentleman who has a Mind equal to great Desires, and a Taste capable of enjoying a much larger Estate than you possess, may have Probity enough to despise the sordid Means too often made use of for acquiring Honours, and accumulating Wealth; to assure the young Sparks about Town, that a Gentleman of an
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DEDICATION.

independent Fortune and a good Constitution may make a Conscience of denying himself the criminal Pleasures so much in Fashion. May You always continue to make a true Estimate of human Life, and expect Your Happiness, where every wise Man will find it, from *Religion* and *Virtue* ! I am,

S I R,

Your Affectionate and Obliged humble Servant,

WILLIAM WEBSTER.

*April the 19th, 1735.
Canon-Street, London.*



IN the Year 1731, I publish'd a Piece, entitled, *The Fitness of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of CHRIST*; which, being out of Print, I have lately taken the Opportunity to republish in the *Weekly Miscellany*, in N^o. 121 and 122. And having, I hope, sufficiently confuted some Cavils, which I had met with both in *Print* and *Conversation*, and which I knew had made an Impression on the Minds of several; I thought it might be of some Use to consider the *Credibility* of those Witnesses; that, as there lay no reasonable Objection against hearing their Testimony, so the Testimony which they had given was sufficient to confirm the Truth of that important Fact, in the Opinion of any impartial Judges. The Number of excellent Discourses already publish'd, had hitherto determin'd me not to offer any thing to the Publick on so exhausted a Subject; but more mature Consideration has alter'd my Sentiments. I am fully convinc'd, that new Discourses upon old Subjects may do Good; not only because every Writer will take a different Manner of stating Things, and the same Argument shewn

in a different Light may affect different Persons, but because they will fall into different Hands. What I have written, may chance to be read by those who would never have read any thing else upon the Subject; and it is possible that personal Acquaintance may influence others to read it with Favour. Without any other Apology, therefore, I shall now proceed to bring the Argument into as clear a Method, and as short a Compass as I can.

The Persons who were selected by Divine Providence to be the chosen Witnesses of this Fact, were the 12 *Apostles* only. For, tho' *Christ* did appear to others, even to 500 at one time, and ascended in the Presence and Sight of 120, yet the *Apostles* only were appointed to bear publick Testimony to the Truth of *Christ's* Resurrection.

My Business at this time shall be to enquire into the Sufficiency of the Testimony of the 12 *Apostles*; for which Purpose I shall,

First, Consider the *Testimony*, or *Evidence* itself, which these Witnesses gave concerning the Fact.

Secondly, Consider the *Credibility* of this Testimony, or Evidence; which will sufficiently appear from the two following Arguments; viz. that the *Apostles* were *competent Judges* of the Fact which they testified, and that they were Men of *Verity* and *Probity*, who would not impose upon the World by reporting a Falshood.

First, I am to consider the *Testimony*, or *Evidence* itself, which these Witnesses gave in relation to the Resurrection of *Christ*; or, in other Words, to enquire what they testified concern-

ing it, because 'twill be to no Purpose to examine into the *Qualifications* and *Characters* of the Witnesses, 'till we have determin'd whether their Evidence, supposing it to be true, be *full* and *home* to the Point. If they express themselves at all *doubtfully* concerning the *Reality* of the Fact, then the *Evidence itself* is defective, and no Considerations drawn from the Circumstances of the *Witnesses* can render it sufficient to induce a *Credibility*. If they *differ* and *contradict* one another in any Part of their Evidence, this is another Circumstance that will destroy the *Sufficiency* and *Credibility* of it. But if they speak *confidently* concerning the Fact, if their Evidence be *strong* and *full*, and if, farther, they agree in giving the *same, concurring*, Testimony, we may proceed regularly to enquire into the *Qualifications* and *Characters* of the Witnesses; whether they were *competent Judges* of the Fact which they testified, and were in themselves *credible* Persons.

That the Apostles asserted the Truth of *Christ's* Resurrection in the plainest and most positive Manner, we read at the 2d Chap. of the *Acts*. Upon the Day of Pentecost, before a Concourse of all Nations, St. Peter, in the *Presence*, and in the *Name* of the rest of the Apostles, explain'd the Prophecies relating to *Christ's* Resurrection, shewing from thence, the Necessity of his Rising; and then he declar'd that *Christ* was actually risen. The *Necessity*, and *Truth* of his Resurrection are both expressly asserted at the 24 Ver. *Whom* (i. e. Jesus) *God has rais'd up, having loosed the Pains of Death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* Again, at the 32 Ver. he says

that *this* JESUS bath God RAISED UP, whereof we ALL, i. e. We, *his Apostles, are Witnesses*; for by *all* here must be meant only the *Apostles*, as appears by the Answer of the People; because the Persons *in whose Name* St. Peter speaks, must be the same with those *to whom* the Answer is directed; and we read that the People said unto *Peter* and to the rest of the *Apostles*, Men and Brethren, what shall we do? In these express Terms do the Witnesses of *Christ's* Resurrection declare the *Reality* of it, without any *Doubt* or *Disagreement* among themselves. When we say the Apostles had no *Doubt* concerning the *Reality* of *Christ's* Resurrection, we do not mean that they *never* distrusted it, but that they were fully satisfied and convinc'd when they appear'd publickly to give their Testimony to the World. If some of them *doubted* at his first Appearance to them (as the History informs us that they did) if St. *Thomas* would not believe 'till he had put his Fingers into the Print of the Nails, and thrust his Hand into our Saviour's Side, tho' their *slowness of Heart* to believe his Resurrection, lessen'd the Merit of their *own Faith*, for which our Saviour reproached them; it was so far from *weakning*, that it *strengthen'd*, their *Testimony*, because it argued great *Unwillingness* to believe, or great *Caution* and *Wariness* in believing a Fact of such Importance without the clearest Evidence to support it. The greater their Prepossessions, the more, and the longer they doubted, their Conviction carries the greater Weight with it.

So likewise, when we affirm that the Witnesses were *agreed* in their Evidence, we intend
no

no more than that they all asserted the Truth of *Christ's* Resurrection, not that all the Apostles, who have given us the History of it, have related it exactly in the *same Order*, and *Manner*, but that none of them *contradict* one another in any Circumstance.

It has indeed been *asserted* that the Account, as related by the Apostles, is inconsistent with itself; but when they produce an *Instance* of any such Inconsistency, 'twill then be time enough to consider it. Hitherto they have been contented with *strong*, but *naked*, Assertions, to which as naked a Denial is a sufficient Answer.

Having settled this Point, that the Witnesses of *Christ's* Resurrection do *agree* unanimously in testifying that he was certainly risen, we shall proceed to consider the *Qualifications* of these Witnesses, and the *Evidence* upon which *they themselves* believ'd it, as they have set it forth in the History.

As to their *Qualifications* to *judge* of the Fact, we need only enquire whether the *Apostles* were in their *Senses*, and whether our Saviour gave them the proper *Evidence* of *Sense* to prove to them that he was risen.

That the Apostles were capable of *hearing*, and *seeing*, and *feeling*, our Enemies, either in the Wantonness of their prophane Wit, or in the Bitterness of their inveterate Malice, have not ventur'd to deny; and therefore if the Apostles had all fitting Opportunities of *conversing* with our Saviour, both *before*, and *after*, his Resurrection, they were as well qualified to *judge* of the Fact, as the most learned and judicious could be.

First,

First, in order to *qualify* the Apostles to *judge* of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection, it was necessary that they should have been well acquainted with the *Person* of Christ while he was *living*. For which Reason, when the Apostles were to *ordain* one to be a Witness in the room of *Judas*, they chose one who had accompanied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, from the Baptism of *John* 'till the Ascension of *Christ*, as we read *Acts* i. 21. The Apostles had constantly attended our Saviour thro' the whole Course of his Ministry, so that they were as well acquainted with his *Person*, and as capable of *distinguishing* him from any *other* Person, as it is possible for one Man to be known to be *different* from another; which Circumstance, as it is shews how well *fitted* the *Apostles* were, as to *this Particular*, to be *Witnesses*, it shews likewise how *improper* it would have been for our Saviour to have appear'd *promiscuously* to the *Multitude*, many of whom had never seen him in his Life-time, or perhaps only *transiently*, and at a *Distance*; which would have occasion'd *variety* of Opinions amongst themselves, and have weaken'd the Credit of their Testimony. But when Christ made choice of his *intimate Companions* for his *Witnesses*, there could be no room to doubt whether *they* were proper Judges of the *Sameness* of the Person of Christ; and the Consequence was, that they were all *unanimous* in their *Opinion*, and *unanimous* in their *Evidence*; such *competent Judges* that they could not *differ*, and so strongly convinc'd, that nothing could ever influence them to *retract*.

We

We are next to enquire whether the Apostles had sufficient Opportunities of conversing with Christ *after* his Resurrection, and comparing the Person who *then* appear'd to them with the Person with whom they had *before* been so long and so intimately acquainted.

The Scripture says that he shew'd himself by many *infallible Proofs*; such as *eating* and *drinking*, and *other Actions of Life*; by which he gave as certain Evidence of his being risen again from the Dead, as he had ever given of his being alive. If there be no Certainty at all in the Evidence of the Senses, there is an end of the Argument at once; but if we may depend upon their Report, they testify this Fact as strongly as possible. But to be particular,

First, He appear'd to them *openly* and *fairly*; not as *Apparitions* are usually said to appear, in the *Night*, when the Mind is most subject to Fear, and the Imagination is apt to form Objects to itself, but in the *Day time* and in *full Light*, when the Attention is most awake, and the Senses best able to perform their Offices faithfully.

Secondly, His Appearances were not *transient*, but *continued*, during the Space of 40 Days, 'till his Ascension; not seldom, but *frequent*, and *familiar*; not at a *distance*, but *near*; not to *one* of the Senses, but to *several*. They *saw* him, they *heard* him, they *felt* him. He perform'd the common Actions of Life in their Company; he *eat* and *drank* and *convers'd* with them; they *handled* him with their *Hands*, and *Thomas* was so particular in his Examination of the Object, as to put his Finger into the *Print of the Nails*, and to thrust his Hand into his Side.

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He talk'd with them concerning the Kingdom which they were to establish, expounding to them the Scriptures relating to himself, instructing them in the Doctrine which they were to publish after his Death, and giving them Directions for their Conduct : from whence they not only might be certain that he was a *real Person* that had *Flesh and Bones*, but from the Sound of his Voice, the Features of his Face, the Form of his Body, the particular *Marks* in it occasion'd by the *Wounds*, and by the Agreement of his Discourses with what he said to them in his Life-time, they might be assur'd that it was the *same Person*, as much as they could at any time be assur'd that *one Man* is not *another Man*.

Thirdly, Another Circumstance in the *Manner* of his appearing to the Witnesses was this, that he appear'd to them *together*; which must have been more convincing to them, and renders their Testimony more satisfactory to *us*, than if he had appear'd to them *only separately*. Company and Conversation naturally give Courage and Presence of Mind under any Surprise, and made the Apostles more capable of judging of the Reality of those strange Appearances with composure and sedateness. Assembled as they *were*, and encouraged by *one another*, we find them startled and affrighted, but they recollected and recover'd themselves; whereas if they had always been *a-part* when our Saviour appear'd to them, they would have been more terrified and less qualified to make a Judgment. I need only suggest this Observation, because it falls within the Compass of every one's Experience, and the Truth of it is undeniable.

From

From these continued and frequent and familiar Appearances the Apostles had sufficient Evidence of the Truth of *Christ's* Resurrection; but there is a very extraordinary Point still behind; I mean, the *miraculous* Manner in which he several times appear'd to them.

First, As two of them were going to a Village about threescore Furlongs from *Jerusalem* (*Em-maus*) while they were talking together about what had happen'd; Jesus drew near and went with them, but they knew him not, because *their Eyes were holden*. St. Luke xxiv. 13.

Some have endeavour'd to account for this in a *natural* Way, without resolving it into a *Miracle*; but I think, the plain Letter of the Text, and common Sense, are both against them. If we consider how well acquainted the Apostles were with him, how lately they had seen him, that he had ask'd them Questions concerning himself, which would naturally awaken their Attention; I say, if we consider all these Circumstances, there can be no room to suppose that they should not know him. And the Text says expressly, that their Eyes were holden; *ἔκλειψεν*, which Word, in the common Acceptation and Use of it in the *New Testament*, signifies *Force* and *Violence*. And here it must signify some *extraordinary* Interposition of the *Divine* Power superseding and hindring their natural Faculties in their proper Operations, that they might not see him so as to know him, *τὸ μὴ ἰδεῖν αὐτόν*. Their Eyes were *holden* and *opened* again *supernaturally*, as their Understandings were open'd *supernaturally* by the *Divine Spirit*, that they might understand the Scriptures. And as soon

soon as they knew him, immediately, after a Manner quite as extraordinary as his Appearances without being known, he *vanish'd out of their Sight*. In the Original it is, ὁ αὐτὸς ἄφαιτος ἐγένετο; which indeed, in a strictly literal Sense, signify no more than that he *disappear'd, or ceased to be seen of them*. But if we take the whole Relation together, it is strongly implied that his Disappearance was *surprizing and supernatural*, as well as *sudden*; after the Manner which we call *vanishing*, or disappearing in such a Manner, that they were not able to discern how he went out of their Sight. For let us but observe the Expression; it is not said that he *left* them, or *went away* from them, but that after he had eat Bread with them, immediately, on a sudden, without their perceiving what became of him, or how they lost sight of him, he disappear'd. This I apprehend to be the natural Construction of the Place, and the whole Affair to be *miraculous*. Neither do I see any sort of Reason why any Christians should put their Invention to the trouble of explaining away the *Miracle*, where a Miracle might naturally be expected, or at least prove greatly serviceable to the *Conviction* of the Apostles.

But there is a Writer, who, I doubt with a very bad Design, has given a very bad Account of this Passage. I shall transcribe it at length, tho' it be tedious, that it may appear fairly, as it is*.

“ Christ's personal Appearance, after his *Resurrection*, was so *different* from what it was before
 “ his *Death*, that his Friends and most intimate
 “ Acquaintance did not know him; which renders
 the

* Four Tracts by Thomas Chubb, p. 63.

[11]

“ the Evidence for a Resurrection with respect to
 “ *Christ*, less certain, because this Circumstance
 “ gives Occasion for *doubting* whether the Person,
 “ who was said to be risen from the Dead, was
 “ *the very same Person* who had been crucified.
 “ Again, *Christ's* personal Appearance after his
 “ Resurrection, is represented to be *different*
 “ at *different times*. Thus, *Mark* xvj. 12. *After*
 “ *that he appear'd in another Form to two of*
 “ *them, as they walked and went into the Country.*
 “ This Circumstance likewise renders the Evi-
 “ dence of *Christ's* Resurrection *less certain*, be-
 “ cause to Appearance it *was not always* the same
 “ Person who appear'd to them. Again, it
 “ looks (according to the Representation given
 “ of this Matter in the History) as if the *Sen-*
 “ *ses* of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of
 “ *Christ* were (at sometimes at least) *over-ruled* and
 “ *misled* by some Foreign Power. Thus *Luke*
 “ xxiv. 16. *But their Eyes were held that they*
 “ *should not know him.* Again, at *Ver.* 31. *And*
 “ *their Eyes were open'd, and they knew him, and*
 “ *he vanish'd out of their Sight.* Now if *such*
 “ *Power* was us'd by some *Foreign Agent* upon
 “ this Occasion, as here seems to be intimated,
 “ then all *Evidence* arising from *Sense* in such a Case
 “ must be *doubtful* and *uncertain*. For, in a Case,
 “ in which the Evidence arises wholly from *Sense*,
 “ the *Senses* ought, in Reason and Equity, to be
 “ left perfectly *free*; and it will have the Ap-
 “ pearance of *Unfairness* for a Foreign Agent to
 “ interpose and mislead the Senses either Way:
 “ and if this be known to be the Case in *one*
 “ Instance, it will render *all* Instances, which
 “ relate to the same Fact, the more *doubtful* and
 “ *uncertain*.”

“ If it should be said, that Christ, after his
 “ Resurrection, shew’d to *Thomas* and the rest
 “ of his Disciples the *Holes* (or *Scars*) which
 “ the Nails had made in his Hands, and which
 “ the Spear had made in his Side, at the Time
 “ of his Crucifixion, and this was an evi-
 “ dent Proof, that the Person, who appear’d to
 “ them, was that very same Person who had be-
 “ fore been crucified.”

“ To this it may be answer’d, That if those
 “ *very Scars* remain’d upon *Christ’s* Body after
 “ his Resurrection, which the Spear and Nails
 “ had made at the Time of his Death; then it
 “ may fairly be presum’d, that the *same Coun-*
 “ *tenance* remain’d with him also. And yet there
 “ is not any thing more clear from the History
 “ than this, *viz.* that *Christ’s* Countenance and
 “ personal Appearance after his Resurrection,
 “ was so very *different* from what it was before
 “ his Death, that those who were most intimate-
 “ ly acquainted with him, did not know him.
 “ And if we admit the Supposition, that the
 “ *Senses* of the Disciples were *misled* by some *fo-*
 “ *reign Agent*, with respect to *Christ’s* *Counte-*
 “ *nance* and *personal Appearance*, and that *that*
 “ was the Cause his Disciples did not know him,
 “ and then their Senses might likewise be misled
 “ with respect to the *Scars* which appear’d up-
 “ on his Body; and consequently, those Disci-
 “ ples *were not* proper Evidences with respect
 “ to either. For, if the Senses of those Evi-
 “ dences *were so far over-ruled*, as that the Person,
 “ whose Resurrection they bear Testimony to,
 “ appear’d with a Countenance, after his Resur-
 “ rection, different from what he did before his
 “ Death;

“ Death; and if he appear’d with different
 “ Forms at different Times ; and if he was visi-
 “ ble at one Moment of Time, and then disap-
 “ pear’d and became invisible the next; then
 “ surely all Evidence arising from *Sense* in such
 “ a Case must be very *doubtful* and *uncertain*.”
 If the Reader is not tir’d with reading this con-
 fus’d Jumble of Things, I am sure I am weary
 of transcribing; and it is very hard, that any
 Circumstances should make it necessary to em-
 ploy one’s Time so disagreeably as in answer-
 ing it.

This Writer is singularly unfortunate in *sta-*
ting his Notion, as well as in making wrong De-
 ductions. This very Fact he states *differently*,
 without seeming to know the *Difference*. At
 one Time he supposes the *same Appearance* of
Christ to be owing to an Alteration in the *Ob-*
ject; at another, to an Alteration in the *Or-*
gans. Now, the Disciples did not know him be-
 cause their *Eyes were held*, that is, *over-ruled* by a
foreign Agent. By and by, it is because the *Coun-*
tenance and *Person* of *Christ* were not the same
at his Death, and *after his Resurrection*. One
 would think the *Writer’s* Faculties were over-
 ruled by some foreign Agent, or he might see
 such gross Contradictions. But if he will be con-
 tented with any *one* Account of this Appearance,
 he is welcome to take which he likes best, but
both cannot be true. The Objection will be the
 same; and therefore let us see how far it destroys,
 as he asserts that it does, the Evidence of *Sense*.

But as this Writer has divided his Objection
 into different Parts, we must be contented to
 follow him in his own Way, and the Whole
 will

will be contain'd in these two, tho' he has branch'd it out into *fourthly*. The Objection then may be consider'd in these two Respects :

First, That our Saviour, according to the Gospel History of it, appear'd *differently* to the Disciples *before his Death*, and *after his Resurrection* :

Secondly, That he appear'd to *them after his Resurrection* in different Forms at different Times.

First, That our Saviour appear'd, according to the Gospel History of it, *differently* to the Disciples *before his Death*, and *after his Resurrection*; which he grounds upon this miraculous Appearance to two of the Disciples, in their Way to *Emmaus*, in so *different a Form* that they did not know him. This was his first Appearance after his Resurrection to these two Disciples ; and it being in a *different Form* from what he had appear'd to them in before his Death, it made them *incompetent Judges* whether he were the *same Person*.

In answer to this Objection I must observe, that it affects only these two Disciples, leaving, as to this particular Fact, the rest of the Disciples sufficiently qualified to judge of the *Sameness* of Person. But the principal Thing to be observed is this ; that he has not (as indeed he seldom does) stated the Case fairly. Let the *Form*, in which he appear'd at *this Time*, be ever so *different* from what he appear'd in before his Death, it does not follow from this Appearance but that he might have appear'd at other Times, to these two Disciples in the very *same Form* in which he had appear'd in his *Life-time* : Neither does this Writer him-
self

self deny it. But what then becomes of this Argument? For, tho' the Form in which he now appear'd might be *different*, yet if he afterwards appear'd in the *same*, they might have Reason to believe the Resurrection, notwithstanding this Objection, as it is here laid. Therefore we must come to the other Part of the Objection, where the whole Strength of it lies; *viz.*

That he appear'd *after* his Resurrection, at *different Times* in *different Forms*; from whence he argues that the Evidence for the Truth of *Christ's* Resurrection, as arising in this Case from the *Evidence of Sense*, must be render'd *uncertain*.

The Fact we allow in the very Instance before us. For, whether the different Appearance were owing to the Difference of *Person*, or to their different *Manner of seeing*, the Effect certainly was, a *different Appearance*; so different, that they did *not know him*. But then we deny his Consequence, *viz.* that this destroy'd the *Evidence of Sense*. The Inference which the Apostles drew from it had a great deal more Sense in it, for they resolved their not knowing him at first, into the miraculous Interposition of a Divine Power; or, as Mr. Chubb affects to express himself, into the Influence of a *foreign Agent*: And how will it follow that the Senses are not to be credited, when left to their *natural Operations*, because God *can over-rule* them; or that we never can tell when they do perform their natural Operations, because he *does sometimes over-rule* them? Apply this Argument to *natural Causes*, and see what a ridiculous Figure it makes. We find often, by Experience, that
without

without a *Miracle*, without the Influence of a *foreign Power*, the Senses represent Things otherwise than they are in *Nature*, and yet never bring a Discredit upon their Testimony, because we can account for it. Under a *Distemper* Objects appear in a false Form to the Eye, and give a false Taste to the Palate; but did ever any Man in his Wits argue from hence that the *Eyes* and the *Palate* can never be safely credited? It is sufficient to their Reputation and Credit, if in their *natural State* they have always been found to make a true Report, and we have any Way of judging when they are in their natural State, and when they are out of Order. So with regard to the *Divine Power* over-ruling them, if we can any way tell when they operate naturally, and when Effects are produced regularly according to the stated Course, particular Interpositions introduce no *Uncertainty*. Thus in the Case before us. At first the two Disciples did not know Christ, because their *Eyes were holden* supernaturally; afterwards he appear'd *plainly* to them in *the very same Form* in which he had appear'd to them in his Life-time. They had as much Reason to believe their Senses *after* his Resurrection as they had *before*, because they had as much Reason to believe that they were not *out of their Senses* for ~~20~~ 40 Days together (for so long Time he abode with them, and conversed intimately with them) as during the three Years of his Ministry before his Crucifixion. The *Certainty* of their *Senses* had been sufficiently establish'd by the constant and universal Experience of Mankind; and in the Course of so long, so frequent, and so intimate a Converse as they had with him during his 40 Days abode with them on Earth, he gave them sufficient Opportunity of being assured that they

they had as due an Use of their Senses for that Course of Time, as in any other Part of their Life; consequently, as no Man calls in question the *general Truth* of their Testimony, notwithstanding their Misrepresentation of Objects in *particular Cases*, by means of some Disorder that interrupts their *natural* Operations; so the Disciples had no Reason to disbelieve their Senses constantly attesting the Truth of *Christ's* Resurrection, during so long an Intimacy with the Object, though God, in this Appearance to two of them, interpos'd to prevent their usual Operations. Let the Reader, for his better Satisfaction, imagine himself in the Circumstances of these two Disciples; that they were in Company with our Saviour for some Time, and conversing with him, without knowing either his Voice or his Person; that at the same Meeting, before he parted from them, he appear'd to them plainly in the *same Form* in which he appear'd to them *before his Death*; that he *continued* frequently, in the plainest and most familiar Way, to appear in the *same Form* upon other Occasions, not only to *them*, but to the *rest* of the Disciples in Company with them, giving them all the Proof of *Reality* which our Senses are capable of. What now would be the natural Judgment of his Understanding in this Case? Surely not, that there is no *Certainty* in the *Senses*, but that the *Author* of them had in this Instance over-ruled their *natural* Operations: And this Judgment he would the more readily make, if he were as well acquainted, as they had been in our Saviour's Life-time, with the Divine Power interposing and interrupting the Course

of Nature. Could it be any great Surprize to them that *he* should here *over-rule* the Faculty of seeing, who had *restored* Sight to so many Persons by the Word of his Power? They had been *accustom'd* to such miraculous Effects, and could not be at a Loss how to interpret this delusive Appearance. And therefore the Disciples were not, properly, *mised*, as Mr. Chubb expresses it; because, tho' there was a *Deception* in the *first* Appearance, yet as they had afterwards such satisfactory Evidence of the *Sameness* of Person as might in Reason convince them that their not knowing him at first was *miraculous*, it would have been their own Fault if they had not seen the *Divine Influence* over-ruling their Senses in *that particular Case*, and believed their Testimony in all the other Instances where they agreed to make the same Report. In short, this Instance proves nothing but a *Miracle*, and I am not able to see how a Miracle makes the Truth of the Fact less credible. What then can this Author mean by accusing his Maker of *Unfairness* in *over-ruling* the Senses of the Disciples, when such an Interposition was a strong Argument of the Truth of *Christ's Resurrection*? It seems, the *Senses*, in a Case depending upon their Evidence, ought in Equity to be left *free*. They were so; they were left so much to their *natural Operations*, as sufficiently to establish their *Certainty*; which being once established, the *supernatural Restraint* in *particular* Instances only shews that the *Author of Nature* interpos'd to manifest his own Power, and give a Sanction to our Saviour.

The next Instance of *Christ's miraculous Appearance* to the Disciples after his Resurrection we find at the 20th Chapter of *St. John*, and the 19th Verse. "Then the same Day at Even, being the first Day of the Week, *when the Doors were shut* where the Disciples were assembled for fear of the *Jews*, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, *Peace be unto you*; and when he had so said, he shewed unto them his Hands and his Side, &c." *St. Thomas* not being with the rest at this Meeting, and not believing their Report of *Christ's Appearance* to them. "After eight Days, again his Disciples were within, and *Thomas* within; then came Jesus, *the Doors being shut*, and stood in the midst, and said, *Peace be unto you*. Then said he to *Thomas* (who had declared that he would not believe without such particular Evidence) reach hither thy Finger and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand and thrust it into my Side, &c." This Appearance, in the Manner of it, was *miraculous*, and the Manner is plainly expressed. The Text says, that when the *Doors were shut* (made fast with Locks or Bars, because it was to secure themselves against the *Jews* breaking in upon them) Jesus stood in the midst of them. Now, it could not be the Intention of the Historian to be so particular in the relation of both Meetings, for the sake of mentioning the Circumstance of the *Doors being shut*, because it could signify nothing to the World. But it becomes a very significant Circumstance when we consider it as expressing the extraordinary Manner of *Christ's* coming among them. When they were assembled together

ther, and the Doors of the Room made fast, Jesus conveyed himself into the Room, and stood in the midst of them, without their perceiving *how*, or *when* he came in. The first that they saw or heard of him was, his standing *in the midst* of them; which could not have been in a *natural* Way. *How* this miraculous Effect was produc'd the History does not mention, but most likely it was, as in the other Instance, by *over-ruling the Senses* of the Disciples. But yet, tho' their *Senses* were *over-rul'd* in this Instance, our Saviour immediately appeals to their *Senses* as an Evidence of the *reality* of his *Appearance*, and the *Sameness* of his *Person*. For, the *Certainty* of the *Senses* is built upon a Foundation no less sure than the *moral* Attributes of God; and God in every *Miracle* appeals to the Evidence of *Sense*. Even in this Case, when the *Senses* were *over-ruled*, the *Certainty* of their *Evidence*, when acting *naturally*, is suppos'd and appeal'd to. This *Miracle* supposes it *naturally* impossible that our Saviour could have convey'd himself as he did amongst them, without their perceiving it; and from thence, from his being able to *over-rule* NATURE, and the establish'd Course of Things, it followed, that it was our Saviour; That Divine Person whom they had so often in his Life-time seen performing such *miraculous*, such *supernatural* Works. But unless there be such an *established* Order of Things, sufficiently known to the World; and unless we can argue from the *moral* Attributes of the Divine Nature, that God will not suffer us to be *deceiv'd* in the *regular* Operation of *natural* Causes; it is impossible for Men to know when
 God

God works a *Miracle*, i. e. when he over-rules *Nature*. But such an *establish'd Order*, sufficiently known to Mankind, and the *moral Attributes* of God, being once suppos'd, it is an easy Matter to *distinguish* NATURAL from SUPERNATURAL Effects. *Miracles* therefore do not *destroy*, but *suppose* the *Certainty* of the *Evidence* of our Senses. But the Intention of all this idle Cavilling is, to destroy the very Notion of *Miracles*, because Miracles destroy their *deistical* Scheme.

At the 21st Chap. of St. *John*, ver. 1. There is a particular Narration of another *miraculous* Appearance to the Disciples. "After these
 " Things *Jesus* shewed himself again to the
 " Disciples at the Sea of *Tiberias*, and on this-
 " wise shewed he *himself*. There were toge-
 " ther *Simon Peter*, and *Thomas*, called *Didy-*
 " *mus*, and *Nathaniel*, of *Cana in Galilee*, and
 " the Sons of *Zebedee*, and two other of his
 " Disciples. *Simon Peter* saith unto them, I go
 " a Fishing. They say unto him, we also go
 " with thee. They went forth, and entered
 " into a Ship immediately; and that Night
 " they caught nothing. But when the Morn-
 " ing was now come, *Jesus* stood on the Shore,
 " but the Disciples knew him not. Then *Jesus*
 " said unto them, Children, have ye any Meat?
 " They answered him, no. And he said unto them,
 " cast the Net on the right Side of the Ship,
 " and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and
 " now they were not able to draw it for the
 " Multitude of Fishes. Therefore that Disci-
 " ple whom *Jesus* lov'd saith unto *Peter*, it is
 " the Lord. Now when *Simon Peter* heard
 " that

“ that it was the Lord, he girt his Fishers
 “ Coat about him, and cast himself into the
 “ Sea. And the other Disciples came in a little
 “ Ship, dragging the Net with Fishes. As soon
 “ then as they were come to Land, they see a
 “ Fire of Coals there, and Fish laid thereon,
 “ and Bread. Jesus saith unto him, bring of
 “ the Fish which ye have now caught. *Simon*
 “ *Peter* went up, and drew the Net to Land
 “ full of great Fishes ; and for all they were so
 “ many, yet was not the Net broken. Jesus
 “ saith unto them, come and dine. And none
 “ of the Disciples durst ask him, who art thou,
 “ knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then
 “ cometh and taketh Bread, and giveth them,
 “ and Fish likewise. This is the *third* Time
 “ that Jesus shewed himself to the Disciples after
 “ he was risen from the Dead.” Then he held
 a long Conversation with *Simon Peter*. But the
 two Circumstances, for the Sake of which I
 mention this Appearance, are, 1st, That after
 they had toiled all Night for nothing, he directed
 them to let down the Net into a particular Place
 in the Sea, where they caught a great Number
 of Fishes; upon which *St. John* immediately
 concluded (tho’ they did not know him before)
 from his *Miraculous* Direction, that it was the
 Lord. 2dly, That the Net was not, *of it self*,
 strong enough to bear so great a Weight; for,
 the History particularly takes Notice of that
 Circumstance, that *for all there were so many, yet*
was not the Net broken. But

While the Disciples were attending to his last
 Charge to them, and beheld him, (*Acts* 1st Ch.
 Ver. 9.) “ He was taken up, and a Cloud re-
 “ ceived

“ceived him out of their Sight; and while
 “they looked stedfastly up to Heaven, two
 “Men stood by them in white Apparel; which
 “also said, ye Men of *Galilee*, why stand ye
 “gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus
 “which is taken from you into Heaven, shall
 “so come in like manner, as ye have seen go
 “into Heaven.” This, as it was the last, so was
 it the most astonishing Appearance of all; and
 as the Miracles which God afterwards wrought
 in Confirmation of their *Testimony*, as *Witnesses*,
 proved to *others* the Truth of their Evidence, so
 these *miraculous* Appearances of Christ to them
 were the strongest Argument to convince *them*
 that they *themselves* were not *deceived*, in respect
 to the reality of his Resurrection. For, when
 they saw the same *Divine Power* accompanying
 him *after his Resurrection*, which constantly at-
 tended him *before his Death*, it was an *infallible*
 Proof of his being the *same Divine Person*.

Thus I have laid together, in as short a Com-
 pass, and in as natural an Order as I could, the
 Testimony of the Twelve Apostles, concerning
 the Truth of Christ's Resurrection; and shewn,
 that they did in the most positive manner assert
 it; that they were Persons the most properly
 qualified to judge of the Matter of Fact, which
 they attested; and that they had the fullest Evi-
 dence, both *natural*, and *supernatural*, for their
 own Conviction.

Having heard the *Evidence* which these Wit-
 nesses gave concerning Christ's Resurrection,
 we are next to consider their *Credit*. If their
Characters be as unexceptionable as their *Account*
 is fair and full, their *Testimony* is indisputable.
 And

And what can carry a greater Appearance of Truth than their Manner of relating Things? It is *plain* and *ingenuous*; without any of those Artifices and Disguises which are practised by designing Men; a naked unimbellish'd Narration. They relate Things as they happen'd, without considering whether they were likely to beget, or to hinder the Belief of others. They were guilty of Weaknesses, which they have not concealed. Their Master reproached them, and his Reproaches are recorded. They were terrified and affrighted, and they own'd their Fears. They doubted, and their Doubts are made part of the History. Their Temper, their Conversation and Carriage were of a piece with their Story; simple and unaffected; void of Art, of Avarice, and Ambition. Neither their Education nor Abilities were likely to put them upon any Attempt to deceive Mankind for their own Advantage. There is not any one Circumstance in their History which gives the least Occasion to suspect them of any dishonest Intention; neither was there any Thing in the Fact which they testified, that would reasonably be supposed to induce them to contrive such a Cheat. They testified a Truth, in the Opinion of the World, *ridiculous* and *absurd*; for which they were sure to have their *Persons* persecuted while living, and their *Names* loaded with satyrical Reproaches when dead. An Intention therefore of *Fraud*, in this Case, is so utterly groundless, whether we consider the Characters of the Witnesses, the Manner of their Evidence, or the Nature of the Truth attested, that any Man who should suppose it in any other Instance but
that

that of *Religion*, would be laugh'd at for his impertinent Folly. But, there is another Circumstance which renders such a Supposition still more ridiculous and absurd.

For, if the Apostles were in a *Confederacy* to impose upon Mankind, the Design must have been form'd *before the Death of Christ*, and then let any one judge what an Absurdity will follow. The *Disciples themselves*, who are here suppos'd to have concerted this fraudulent Scheme, had no Notion of the *Resurrection* of their Master before he suffer'd, nor of his *Sufferings* and *Death* 'till he was apprehended and carried to his Trial; upon which they all in great Confusion *forsook him and fled*. When he gave them warning of his approaching Fate, the Answer was; *THAT be far from thee Lord!* And after his *Crucifixion* they as little thought of his rising again, 'till he was actually risen, and explained to them the *Prophecies* relating to his *Death* and *Resurrection*; insomuch that when the News was brought them of their Master's being risen, they look'd upon it *as an idle Tale, and believ'd it not*. This is expressly asserted at the 16th Chapter of *St. Mark*, Ver. 9. " Now when Jesus was risen
 " early, the first Day of the Week, he appear'd to
 " *Mary Magdalene*, and she went and told them
 " that had been with him, as they mourned and
 " wept. And they, when they heard that he was
 " alive, and had been seen of her, believ'd not. Af-
 " ter that he appear'd to *two of them*, as they
 " walked and went into the Country (to *Emmaus*)
 " and they went and told the Residue, neither
 " believ'd they *them*. After that he appear'd to
 " the *Eleven* (to all the Apostles together) and
 E " up-

“ upbraided them with their Unbelief, and Hard-
 “ ness of Heart, because they believ’d not them
 “ which had seen him after he was risen.” From
 which last Words it is plain that the Persons to
 whom *Mary Magdalene* and the other two car-
 ried the News, were the *Apostles*, because our
 Saviour blames the *Apostles* for not believing the
 Report. From hence also appears the Ground-
 lessness of the Criticism of a celebrated Com-
 mentator on this Passage, *viz.* That tho’ the
plural Number be here us’d, yet only St. *Tho-*
mas may be meant when our Saviour is said to
 upbraid *them*. He might with equal Reason
 imagine that our Saviour *appear’d* only to St.
Thomas, or that the News was *told* only to *him* ;
 for all that heard the Report, and saw our Sa-
 viour, are said to *disbelieve*.

The last and greatest Proof that the Witnes-
 ses gave, or that could be given, of their *Ho-*
nesty, was their *dying* for the Truth which they
 testified. This ought to remove all Suspicion of
 their testifying a *Falshood*, because there never
 was any Instance of a Man’s *dying* for a *false Fact*,
 especially a Fact that would bring Disgrace upon
 their *Persons* and *Memory*, tho’ some have died
 for a *false Opinion* and *false Glory*. Upon the
 Whole, the Truth of the Resurrection of
 Christ is as credible upon the Testimony of his
Disciples, as *human* Testimony can render any
 Fact. But as this was a Fact of such infinite Im-
 portance to Mankind, God was pleas’d to afford
 the World stronger Evidence than we have for
 the Truth of any historical Fact relating only to
 this Life; for, he empower’d those *Witnesses* to
 work *Miracles* in Confirmation of it; which is
 the

the strongest Evidence that we can have for the Truth of any thing. There is no Occasion to enumerate the various Miracles which they wrought, and impower'd others to work, since no one, who owns the Genuineness of the History contain'd in the New Testament, can possibly deny that before his *Ascension* he promis'd the Apostles this Power, and afterwards fulfill'd it; or that the Apostles publickly exercis'd this Power. But I shall cite one Miracle of the most publick Nature, and the least liable to be disputed. The Account of it we have at the 2d Chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*, Ver. 1. "When
 " the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they
 " were all with one Accord in one Place: And
 " suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as
 " of a rushing mighty Wind, and it fill'd all
 " the House where they were sitting. And
 " there appear'd unto them cloven Tongues,
 " like as of Fire, and it sat upon each of them.
 " And they were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost,
 " and began to speak with other Tongues as
 " the Spirit gave them Utterance. And there
 " were dwelling at *Jerusalem* Jews, devout Men,
 " out of every Nation under Heaven. Now
 " when this was nois'd Abroad, the *Multitude*
 " came together, and were confounded because
 " that every Man heard them speak in his own
 " Language. And they were all amazed and
 " marvelled, saying one to another, behold,
 " are not all these which speak *Galileans*, and
 " how hear we every Man in our *own* Tongue
 " wherein we were born!" Then follows an Enumeration of 17 different Nations, whose Languages the Apostles spoke, tho' they were

illiterate Persons, who never had the Opportunity of acquiring Languages in the ordinary Way. Here cou'd be no possible Room for Imposition and Chear. The *human* Means of acquiring the Knowledge of a foreign Language, is obvious and indisputable. The Education of the Apostles, and their Incapacity to speak so many Languages without a *supernatural* Assistance was as notorious, which occasion'd so much Astonishment in the *Multitude*: And therefore the Consequence is unavoidable, that God confirm'd the Truth of their Evidence by conferring upon them such *supernatural* Powers that their Testimony might gain Credit, and convert Infidels to the Belief of Christianity. But then, how impertinent is it to object against the Testimony of the *Apostles* on account of their *Number*, their *Station*, their *Circumstances*; when this *divine* Attestation so undeniably supplied any Defect, which they, in their *self* Conceit, may be inclin'd to think there was in the *personal* Characters of the Witnesses? *Miracles*, our Adversaries themselves being Judges, are a Proof of a Divine Power and Mission. Says that most inveterate Adversary, *Woolston*; If God did raise up Christ from the Dead, no Doubt Christ was the Messiah, because it is absurd to suppose that a God of Truth wou'd set his Seal to a Falseness. Now, if the Power of speaking so many Languages without learning them be truly *miraculous*, as it must be allowed to be, a *Miracle* is as much a Miracle, and as strong a Proof of Truth, when wrought in Confirmation of the Testimony of 12, as of 12,000 Persons; of private Persons, as of Rulers; of Friends,

as

as of *Enemies*. They must, therefore, retract their Concession in respect to the Force of Miracles when wrought in Confirmation of any Truth, or deny the *Credibility of all History*; for otherwise they will be oblig'd to give their Assent to the Truth of *Christ's Resurrection* upon the Evidence of the Apostles; or rather upon the Testimony of God himself.

If it be objected that this is proving *one Miracle* by *another*, the Reader should observe that I am not now arguing from the Resurrection of *Christ*, consider'd as a *Miracle*, but only proving the Truth of the *Fact*. *Christ's raising himself from the Dead* is, no doubt, as great a *Miracle* as ever was wrought, but the *Greatness* of the *Miracle* does not prove the *Truth* of the *Fact*, tho' it be a Proof of the *Truth* of *Christianity* when the *Fact* itself is prov'd: And surely the mighty Works which God enabled the *Witnesses* of *that Fact* to perform in Confirmation of it, gives a Sanction to their Evidence, and makes the Thing testified more *certain* than it could have been, if resting only on *human* Testimony. To assert the Contrary, is to say, that the Testimony of *Men* is equal to the Testimony of God, and demands an equal Assent.

As to the Force of *Miracles* no one can deny that they are a *Divine Attestation* given to the Credit of the Person who performs them, without denying the *moral Attributes* of *God*, and the *Possibility* of an *external Revelation* of his Will to Mankind. For, since *Miracles* (under which Character I include *Prophecies*) are the only Proof that one Man can give another of his having a *Divine Commission*, unless we can be certain that
God

God will not suffer us *necessarily* to be impos'd upon by *Miracles* wrought in Support of an *Impostor*, 'tis impossible for us to give a *rational Assent* to the Truth of any Revelation, because we can have no *certain Criterion* by which we may distinguish *false* Prophets and Apostles from *true* ones. For which Reason I do not remember to have met with any Infidels who deny the Argument drawn from *Miracles*, supposing such to be really wrought; but many of them, as far as I am able to collect their Opinions from their Writings, seem to deny the *Possibility of Miracles*, which answers their Purpose as well. This Objection strikes at the Foundation of our Religion; and therefore, tho' it does not concern our present Subject *particularly*, yet as it effects the *Resurrection of Christ* in common with all other Parts of *Christianity*, it ought to be consider'd. I shall therefore enquire what is the true Notion of a *Miracle*, and how it becomes a Proof of any Truth.

A *Miracle* has by some Writers been defin'd to be a *Work which none but God can perform*. But this Definition would render the Argument drawn from *Miracles*, if not uncertain in itself, yet liable to much Cavil, and less effectual towards Conviction. For since we know not the *Extent* of all *created Powers*, there would always be Room for this captious Question, How can we tell whether any particular Work, pretended to be *miraculous*, be out of the Reach of any *created Being* to perform, since there are *created Beings* so vastly Superior in Power to any that we are acquainted with? A *Miracle* then I would rather define thus: *A Work which no Being, that*

WE ARE ACQUAINTED WITH *can perform* : Or, which is the same thing, a *Work that is out of the STATED Order of Things known to Us*. And such a Work would answer all the Purposes of a *Miracle*, whether it were, or were not, beyond the Extent of all *created Powers* to perform. For, if any Work be perform'd, in Confirmation of any *religious Truth*, which is out of the *stated Order of Things that we are acquainted with*, we may be assur'd that such a Work is perform'd by *God himself*, or by *his Permission*, since otherwise we are liable to be impos'd upon *necessarily*, in an Affair relating to the *Honour of God*, and the *Good of his Creatures*. We have no Way to convince any Man that we have a Commission to reveal the *Will of God* to him, but by some *extraordinary external Action*, that shall be a *Seal* of the Truth of his Pretensions; in consequence of which it follows, that God will not permit any superior invisible Being to supersede that *established Course* of second Causes which we are acquainted with, in Confirmation of a *Falshood*, since such a Permission would *necessarily* mislead us, and put it out of our Power to distinguish a *true Revelation* from a *Counterfeit*. Supposing then such an *extraordinary Work* might be within the Power of a superior invisible *Creature* to perform, we know, from the *natural Attributes* of God, that he *can* restrain the Power of all his *Creatures*, and from his *moral Attributes* that he *will* do it in this Instance, to prevent a Cheat dishonourable to himself, and injurious to us.

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The *establisht* Order of things, *known* to us, being the *Criterion* by which we are to judge of *miraculous* Works, let us inquire whether such Works as these be *possible* in the nature of things.

If it be impossible to suppose that the *known establisht* Order of Things should be interrupted, the Impossibility must arise from the *natural*, or *moral* Attributes of God; *i.e.* It must be out of his Power to *alter* that Order of Things which he himself appointed, and that when he gave things their Existence and Properties, he made them all *Independent* of himself; or else, though he may have a *physical* Power to do it, that it is inconsistent with the Perfections of his Nature to make use of his Power to interrupt the Course of second Causes. That the Author of Nature should not have Power to controul his own Creatures, is too great an Absurdity for any Man in his Wits to maintain. Therefore let us see, 2dly,

Whether, though God must have a *physical* Power of doing it, it be consistent with his *moral Perfections* to exercise that Power. If it be not, the Inconsistency must respect either *himself*, or *us*. If it respects *himself*, it must be because it would argue *Mutability* in God to *change* that Course of things which he himself appointed. But in order to prove this to be any Instance of *Mutability* in the Divine Nature, they must shew one of these two things; either that God, at the Creation, when he appointed this Order of second Causes, made a *Declaration* to his Creatures, or a *Resolution* within himself, that he would never interpose to disturb it. If there be any such *Declaration* to be

be found, why is it not produced? As to any *Resolution* within the Divine Mind, it is Nonsense to talk of what must be *unknown* to us. If neither any *Declaration* can be produced, nor any secret *Resolution* discover'd, there can be no other Way of proving that our Omniscient Creator, when he first *establish'd* this Order of Things for the *general* Course of his Government of the World, did not intend, on certain *extraordinary* Occasions, to depart from his *general* Method, for the greater Manifestation of his own Glory, and the Good of his Creatures. This Conduct, I say, for any thing that appears, may be necessary for the Accomplishment of those wise and benevolent Dispensations which from all Eternity he had *unalterably* form'd in his infinite Mind. There is, indeed, in this Method of Government, a *Variation* with regard to the *Manifestation* of it to his *Creatures*, but no *Deviation* from his own *immutable* and *external* Purposes. He acts as he always intended to do.

If the Absurdity of God's *varying*, on particular Occasions, from his *general* Method of Government respects *us*; it is, it seems, because such a Variation would leave us in perpetual *Doubts* and *Uncertainties*. As to what? If they mean with Regard to God's *particular Reasons* of acting after such a Manner, it may be true, but nothing to the Purpose. If they mean that this wou'd render the Belief of a *Providence* doubtful, or make it impossible for us to distinguish the *general* Course of his Government from his *extraordinary Interpositions*, the Objection confutes itself. For, if there be a *known, establish'd* Order, it must, in the Nature of Things,

distinguish *itself* from any *Variations* from it; as such extraordinary *Variations* from the *known, establish'd* Order must (if we can prove his *moral* Perfections) shew the *immediate Interposition* of the Universal Governour.

I should not insist on such Objections as these, if Men who set up themselves, and one another, for profound Reasoners, did not urge them; and if I had not, myself, met with Instances of such *formal Trifles*, I could scarce have believ'd it possible that there should be any such amongst *pretended Philosophers*.

And now that I am upon the Subject of *Miracles*, I shall mention another Position of theirs, which they seem to advance with great Consolation, and an Air of Triumph. Their Intention in advancing it is obvious, but how it can answer their Intention, is to *me*, as yet, a Secret. The Position is this; *That Miracles are a Proof of nothing but mere Power*. What is this to the *Truth of Revelation*, as prov'd by Miracles? For, how do we urge the Argument from *Miracles* in Proof of *Revelation*? Not by *proving* from *them* the *moral*, or even the *natural* Attributes of God. We are suppos'd *antecedently* to have prov'd, from *Reason*, the *Being* and *Attributes* of the Divine Nature; and these Attributes being suppos'd, we infer from *thence*, that such Works, when wrought by one who pretends to work them in the *Name* of God, must be perform'd by his *immediate*, or *mediate* Assistance; that they could not have been wrought without such Assistance; or, at least, if it *were* within the *natural* Powers of any invisible, created Being to perform them, that God wou'd not have
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permitted it on such Occasions ; because such *extraordinary Works*, out of the *established Order* of second Causes, *known to us*, must necessarily deceive us in a Matter of the last Consequence. In short, we do not prove from *Miracles* the *Power*, the *Wisdom*, the *Goodness*, &c. of God ; but from his *Power*, *Wisdom*, *Goodness*, &c. we prove that *Miracles* are wrought by *him*, or by his *Commission* ; from whence we infer the Truth of any Doctrine or Fact, in Confirmation of which they are wrought, it being absurd to suppose that a Being of infinite Perfections should set his Seal to a *Falshood*.

To what has been offer'd in Proof of *Christ's Resurrection*, from the Evidence given us in the *New Testament*, I do not see any other Answer that can be made, but denying the Truth of the *History*. But this is not properly *answering* the *Arguments*, but *destroying* the *Question* under Consideration ; which supposes and takes for granted the *Genuineness of the Records* from whence we produce our Evidence, and enquires whether that Evidence be sufficient to induce a rational Assent. Neither can they offer to dispute the Authentickness of the *Scripture*, consider'd only as a *History of Facts*, without throwing off *all Historical Faith* at once. A Piece of *Scepticism* too wild and extravagant to be ever admitted while there are any Remains of common Sense among us ; or *publickly* to be owned by any *Infidel Writers*, whatever they may pretend *privately* when they are hard press'd by the Arguments in proof of *Christianity*. I think I may venture to take it for granted, that no *Infidel*, who has the least Regard to the Reputation of his Understanding,

will seriously deny (if he does, I am sure Confinement and a proper Regimen will be more suitable to his Condition than *reasoning* with him) that any Credit is due to the *Greek*, the *Roman*, or the *English* History ; that there ever was (for Instance) such a Person as *Henry the Eighth of England*, Lord *Cromwell*, *Cranmer* or Cardinal *Wolfey* ; or that any of their Actions, recorded in our Histories, relating to the *Reformation of Religion*, are true. On the contrary, Men of all Parties and Opinions receive them *in the Main* as authentick Accounts, whatever Mistakes there may be as to minute Circumstances. Now, if we agree to esteem these Histories as *credible*, the History of Facts, relating to the *Resurrection of Christ*, recorded in the *New Testament*, must, in all Reason, be allowed *equally* worthy of Credit. The Account given there of these Matters is as fair and consistent, and carries as strong Lines of Truth in the very Face of it. The *Historians* seem to be Persons of as much Probity and Simplicity. There seems, as far as we can judge from the Nature of the Facts, and the Truth which they support, as little Room to imagine that they could have any reasonable Inducement to falsify. The *sacred* History, therefore, is at least, *upon a Level* with any *profane* one of the most allow'd Credit. But there are many Circumstances which give it greatly the Advantage over any other History. The *sacred* Historians relate nothing concerning *Christ's Resurrection* but what *they themselves* knew perfectly ; whereas other Historians relate Things done at a Distance from the Time and Place, when and where they were transacted, and so
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write from *Traditional* or other written Accounts. The Importance of the Things related, may naturally be suppos'd to make the *Historians* more careful to relate them fully and accurately ; as it naturally dispos'd others to Caution and Wariness in receiving their Reports. It is also more likely that Mankind should have had better Opportunities of detecting any Falshoods, whether you suppose the History to be written soon after the Time of those Transactions, or at any Distance from it. If the History were written soon after the Transactions, in the Memory of Persons then alive, the Apostles must be suppos'd to have related them to great Numbers of People, who would have been able and ready to have contradicted the History. If you fix the Date of the History lower, as low as you please, yet still the *sacred* Story preserves its Superiority over any *civil* History ; for the Facts being of so much greater Consequence, if they were true, they must at first have made a greater Impression upon Mankind, been more taken Notice of, better remember'd, and more carefully transmitted ; and therefore when you suppose this History to have been drawn up, here would have been a more particular and concurrent Tradition, as well as private Accounts preserv'd by particular Persons, and publick Registers, with which, when written, it might, and would have been compar'd, and confuted, if false. For these Reasons, likewise, it is more likely that this History should have been preserv'd freer from Corruption than any other History, on account of its *more publick* and *important* Nature. It concern'd not *one Nation*, but *all Mankind*. Its
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Consequences reach'd beyond the low Regards of this Life to eternal Ages. The History being of this universal Concern, and of such infinite Moment, it cannot be conceiv'd but that variety of Copies would immediately be taken of it, and dispers'd over all Parts of the World, to which the Converts of different Nations belong'd; by which Means any *material* Interpolations or Omissions might, and would have been discover'd and publickly detected. All this is highly probable *in itself*, as our Experience of human Nature and the usual Conduct of Mankind testifies. But there is a Circumstance of Advantage still superior to all these. Some of these Facts are commemorated from the Time of their Transaction, or immediately after, by external Actions. As for Instance, That *Miracle* of the *Gift of Tongues* was commemorated by a solemn Festival, which we call *Whitsunday*; which the History mentions as a Thing well known to them. And therefore at whatever Distance of Time you suppose the History to have been written, the People to whom he writes must know whether there were then, and had been from the Time that the Facts were done, or near it, any such Memorial observ'd in the Church. To illustrate the Force of this Proof by a parallel Case: Suppose, there had been some external Rite appointed to be observ'd by all the People of *England* in Memory of the *Revolution*, that the Observance of this Rite commenc'd immediately after the Event, or within the Memory of those Persons who were alive when the History of the *Revolution* was first publish'd, and that the History mentions this publick Observance,

servance, with its Rise and Design, as a Thing well known to them. If there had been no such Custom then in Being, the People must have known it, for the Historian could not have made the whole Nation believe that they observ'd a Rite in Memory of an Event, when they knew of no such Event, or the Commemoration of it. This Circumstance must have detected the Fraud, and have hinder'd the History from being received as Genuine, at what Time soever you suppose it to have been publish'd.

I have no Occasion to enlarge upon this Proof, it being already done to so great Advantage, by Mr. *Lestly*, in his *Short Method with the Deists*, and his Defence of it. In this unanswerable Piece the Author lays down *four Marks* which belong to the *Scriptures*, and which cannot possibly belong to any *Imposture*. To this most excellent Book I refer the Reader for an Antidote (when well consider'd and understood) against the venomous Artifices of the most subtle *Deists*.



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